180. Responsibility of Government in the matter of food supply.

Mr. T. Kumara Pillai (Member, Kalkulam taluk) said that the recent war had exposed the economic helplessness of the State and its dependence on other countries. Fortunately for the people, the Government intervened and saved the situation for which the people were very grateful. The organisation of the Department of Civil Supplies was, no doubt, a step in the right direction. Still, there were certain serious defects in its management and the object of the Member was to point them out in the interests both of the Government and the people. In the responsible and difficult task of distribution of rice, non-official co-operation could, with advantage, have been secured. But that work was entrusted to subordinates of the Police Department who were not above suspicion. For instance, there was the passport system of transporting paddy from South Travancore. That was worked to the great hardship of the people till the arrival on the scene of a member of the higher ranks of the Police Service. But the main issue was how to make the State self-sufficient in the production of paddy. From an examination of figures of production and import of paddy from 1040, the Member argued that the economic capacity of the average ryot was getting worse. In 1040 the State was able to export rice and paddy to the value of Rs. 20,467. But the tables were turned from 1050. During 1050 and 1057 paddy began to be imported and the average cost per head of paddy and rice imported was 14 chs.-10 cash. During the next 10 years the amount increased to 17 chs.-7 cash, which again, during the two succeeding decades, came to 27 chs. and 1 Re.-21 chs.-8 cash respectively. During the six years following the cost went up to 3 Rs. 14-chs. Though for the year 1093 there was an apparent fall, *viz.*, Rs. 3-13 chs.-5 cash, it rose to Rs. 4-23 chs.-12 cash in 1094. The causes which contributed to the steady and annual increase as noted above were two-fold. In the first place, there were serious difficulties thrown in the way of increasing the food production and, secondly, the absence of increase of lands for cultivation in proportion to the increase in population. According to the Director of Agriculture, the most urgent requirement for the ryot was water. The vital importance of water for cultivation was recognised by earlier Dewans from the eighties and the Kodayar Irrigation Project was conceived and carried out by Dewans who were "sons of the soil". Wherever the Kodayar water could not reach special provision had been made for the supply of water to the lands. The Member then quoted statistics and drew inferentially therefrom the conclusion that of late the matter of water supply had been pushed backward in the irrigational programme of the P. W. D. If the money required for the completion of the Kodayar Irrigation Scheme were deducted from the grant allotted for irrigation in the P. W. D. Budget, the balance for irrigation proper for the major portion of the State would be found to be negligible. The policy which underlay the grant of special funds for irrigation was that the State should be self-supporting in food-supply and that was the case about 4 decades ago when the interests of the agricultural population were sedulously looked after. The older irrigation works were a standing monument of the solicitude and attention of not only the Heads of Administration but also of the Revenue Officers who were in charge of the Divisions and Taluks. The Member then described the various stages of neglect which characterised the numerous irrigation works in such taluks as Vilavancode, Neyyattinkara, Eraniel, &c., the allotments to which had all been stopped when the Kodayar Scheme began to be seriously worked. The contention of the Member was that, as the expenditure on the Kodayar Project was profitable investment yielding a good interest, the allotment for irrigation should never have been curtailed. The next requirement of the agriculturist the absence of which had acted as a serious handicap was grazing ground for cattle. Cattle breeding was a favourite occupation of the ryot, but with the imposition of restrictions on grazing grounds and other causes, the breeding of cattle had to be stopped and the ryots were the sufferers. For, each ryot maintained, under favourable circumstances, several heads of cattle not only for draught purposes, but also for the manure they gave. When local cattle were not available, the ryot had to import them which was a big item of expenditure in the production of paddy. The Member then reviewed the present situation in regard to grazing grounds, and explained how rocky and otherwise unsuitable lands were being reserved

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as grazing grounds and how excellent areas reserved as grazing grounds were being registered away in the names of influential individuals, etc. He next dealt with the third requisite for cultivation of paddy, *viz*, green leaf manure. He said that, as a result of the conversions going on under the Kodayar Irrigation scheme, several garden lands had been made into paddy fields. The area of such conversions was 12,296 acres which, before they were put under paddy, supplied green leaf manure. Thus, the area for growing trees for green leaf had become considerably reduced. Till 1057 the ryots enjoyed the unrestricted use of the green leaf from the forests. Later on, the rules of the Forest Department began to be passed one by one which caused great hardship to the ryots in the matter of green leaf manure. At the eleventh Session of the Assembly, the Member represented the difficulties experienced by the ryots in getting green leaf manure and the result was the issue of the G. O. dated 12th February 1916 which permitted the people to take green leaf from unreserved forests. But the practical disadvantage which the people had to face was that such unreserved forests could not be ascertained. Those were the three causes which directly affected the production of paddy in the State and it was for Government to remove those causes, if paddy cultivation is to be encouraged in the State. The recommendation of the Department of Agriculture was to use nightsoil in the place of green leaf manure. But it was forgotten that the staying power of the ryot had been getting weaker and weaker every year and today the ryot was so poor that he could not afford to buy nightsoil or any other scientific manure. The next food crop was tapioca. On account of the scarcity of paddy the use of tapioca as an article of food was widely on the increase. But the output was not as large as the demand for it. Here again, another difficulty presented itself in the shape of the export of tapioca, and the expansion of the area for tapioca cultivation was the only alternative. In other words, the registry of waste lands on a well-regulated and practical system should be enforced. The Government had passed excellent G. O's. and rules in regard to the registry of *puduvals* and it had been distinctly laid down in the Puduval Rules that "all officers of the Land Revenue Department should bear in mind that the prompt disposal of Puduval applications is one of their main functions and that it is their duty to secure extension of cultivation by encouraging the ryots to take up lands affording them facilities for doing so." But in practice the people were being subjected to innumerable difficulties and inconveniences in getting waste lands registered. The Member then described the irregularities of the Revenue officials and gave instances to show that the Government rules and orders were more honoured in their breach than in their observance. In order that the object of Government in *puduval* registry might be realised and the grievances of the people removed, the Member suggested that Surveyors should first be appointed for each taluk to find out all waste lands and then fix their boundaries. The lands should then be sub-divided into convenient blocks. The trees in each block should then be ascertained and a plan prepared for each block. The Dewan Peishkar should then go to each block and fix the *tharavila*, *thadivila* and assessment. The registry should then be effected. In conclusion, the Member dilated on the malpractices in the disposal of the tank-beds and contended that the rules laid down by Government therefor were not being followed and he drew the attention of Government to it.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

181. Need for returning a separate Member for the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly from the cardamom ryots.

Mr. C. A. Meera Rowther (Member, Nominated) said that most of the cardamom ryots in the Peermade, Periyar, Mlapara and Vandamettu *pakuthies* were residents of Koodallur, Uttamapalayam, Kombay and other places in British India adjoining the Peermade taluk and that those among them, who paid an annual tax of Rs. 50 and above, lost the right of voting in the taluk for the reason that they were not permanent residents of the taluk. The result was that persons from Kanjirapalli and other places, who were ignorant of the difficulties of cardamom cultivation, were elected as Members and the grievances of the cardamom ryots were not properly represented in the Assembly by such Members. The Member, therefore, requested that the

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